

wish it to be clearly understood that I do not dispute the desirability of excluding organisms from wounds. I merely question the possibility of doing so with our present means.

It must be borne in mind that the fact of a wound being treated antiseptically and doing well is no proof whatever that living organisms have been excluded from it. It is quite possible that they may have entered and done no harm, just as they do in numberless operations performed without antiseptics and with perfect results. There are two ways in which we may seek to prove the efficacy of antiseptics: either by comparing the results of a large number of similar cases, some treated with and others without antiseptics, or by performing experiments so planned that if any germs escape destruction by the antiseptics they must declare themselves. For the statistical method the materials are at hand in the case of abdominal surgery, and I may take it as proved that in this branch no better results are at present obtained by antiseptic methods than without them. We must therefore conclude, as regards abdominal surgery, either that germs are harmless, or that, antiseptics being ineffectual, the two methods are equally septic and differ only in name. What is true of one branch of surgery is not necessarily true of another, and it would be very interesting to discover whether the results of ophthalmic surgery are in harmony with the experimental facts which point to the utter inability of antiseptics to free the eye from the most lusty germs. Among others, an interesting paper by Dr. Dubief in the September number of the *Annales d'Oculistique* seems to set forth very clearly the practical impossibility of doing such an operation as the extraction of cataract aseptically, and it determined me to perform the following experiment to test the method, which apparently just now is widely believed to lead to aseptic results. I killed a healthy rabbit, cut off its head, and immediately plunged the head into a basin containing solution of hyd. perchlor. (1 in 4000). With a pair of forceps and scissors well cleaned and soaked in the solution the eyes and tongue were removed under the water, well shaken about in it for half a minute, taken out with the forceps, and immediately sealed up with chloroform in gutta-percha tissue bags previously soaked in and just removed from a solution of perchloride of 1 in 4000. In a few days all the specimens stank abominably, and the fact that living organisms existed in them was made obvious.

I contend that at present it is impossible to operate on the human eye in a way more likely to destroy germs, or to dress it after the operation in a manner so likely to exclude them; and I cannot help thinking that if those surgeons who attribute their good results to asepsis would check their methods in some such way as I have described they might discover that the asepsis is imaginary. We can all admit the theoretical advantages of asepsis, and if so far antiseptics have proved inefficient, it is hard to blame those who introduced antiseptic methods in the full hope of perfect asepticity. The antiseptic theory has helped to impress the importance of cleanliness, and recent experiments have shown the uselessness of antiseptics without it, for the substances which may be regarded as representing the gastric juice and urine and excrement of germs are capable of giving rise to suppuration, and should antiseptics destroy the bodies they cannot destroy these spirits of the germs. A piece of dirt in the teeth of a pair of forceps may get loose in an eye and set up mischief after it has been boiled and treated with antiseptics.

I am, Sirs, yours truly,

Southampton, Dec. 3rd, 1891.

J. F. BULLAR.

### UNILATERAL PAROTITIS.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—I am much interested in a short note in your issue of Dec. 12th, in which Dr. H. B. Donkin records the occurrence of unilateral parotitis in three cases of gastric ulcer during strict treatment by nutrient enemata. I am, however, disposed to think that dryness of the buccal mucous membrane, with blocking of Steno's duct, is not—at any rate, in all cases—the cause. During the past three weeks I have seen a gentleman, aged twenty-six, several times in consultation with Dr. Tireman. He had gastric ulcer with profuse hæmatemesis on Nov. 11th, 16th, and 20th. I saw him first on Nov. 16th and he was allowed ice only by the mouth, nutrient suppositories being used every four hours. All bleeding having ceased on Nov. 18th, peptonised milk,

one or two tablespoonfuls at a time, was allowed, the nutrient suppositories being still continued. On Nov. 20th bleeding occurred again, about one pint being vomited, and nothing but ice was allowed for the next two days; a tablespoonful of milk and soda water every half hour was then allowed, the nutrient suppositories being steadily continued throughout. On Nov. 24th the left parotid was noticed to be swollen and the temperature 100°; in two or three days, however, the swelling had entirely disappeared, and the temperature, which rose to 102°, had fallen to normal. In this case the buccal mucous membrane never became dry, and though nutriment was being given by rectum, about two pints of milk and soda water had been taken in the twenty-four hours preceding the onset of the parotitis. This is the first case of gastric ulcer in which I have met with unilateral parotitis, and certainly in this case the causal association mentioned by Dr. Donkin does not hold good.

I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,

Hull, Dec. 12th, 1891.

FRANK NICHOLSON.

### "WANT OF ISOLATION ACCOMMODATION IN SOUTH HORNSEY."

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—The letter on the above subject in your last issue requires no reply from me, but I find a report has been circulated and commented upon by some of the London weekly papers—viz., that in South Hornsey scarlet fever of a malignant character is now raging. This, I am thankful to say, is not the case, and I may add that no death from it has taken place in the district during the past year.

I have been asked on several occasions during the last week if it is not true that scarlet fever and other zymotic diseases spread from South Hornsey to the surrounding districts. This I will endeavour to show cannot be the case by the following brief statement of the sanitary condition of the district since my appointment in 1873, and which may not prove altogether uninteresting to your readers. In that year the death-rate was 17·5 per 1000, in London it was 22·8. The zymotic death-rate was 2·9. For the first five years the average death-rate was 17·7, and the zymotic death-rate averaged 1·1. The death-rate has gradually decreased, and last year it was only 11·7, and the zymotic death-rate 1·1.

These facts speak for themselves as to the sanitary condition of South Hornsey, showing it to be the healthiest district around London, and that although the density of the population is greater than that of London itself, where it is 56·5 per acre, while in South Hornsey it is 58·2.

I am, Sirs, yours truly,

THOS. S. H. JACKMAN,

Dec. 16th, 1891.

Medical Officer of Health, South Hornsey.

### THE AFTER-TREATMENT OF PLASTIC OPERATIONS ON THE PERINEUM.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—All must agree with Mr. Nevins as to the importance of avoiding suppuration in these cases, but my experience leads me to lay little blame on the urine if this does occur; if the wound is properly closed, no urine can reach it. The directions I give to the nurse are not to use the catheter if by any means the patient is able to do without it. No syringing is necessary in small cases, but bathing of the external parts with hot water is sufficient. I always avoid even looking at the wound until the seventh day, when the stitches are removed, unless there is pain or some unusual symptom. The patient can usually pass urine by turning on to her face.—I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,

Harley-street, Dec., 1891. WALTER S. A. GRIFFITH, M.D.

### INCREASED DIRECT REPRESENTATION.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—I also, with Dr. Wilks, do not desire to prolong the discussion further. The result of the election has conclusively proved what I thought, that the majority of the profession desire to be represented in the General Medical Council by general practitioners; and neither is the profession as apathetic

or as powerless as some in its upper ranks believed. But, in reply to Dr. Wilks, the registration fee is now certainly, as Dr. Wilks says, paid by the parents (many of whom are medical men); still it was not always so. A great many medical men who are now in middle age paid it themselves. When I qualified it was not necessary to register at once, and I did not register until more than a year after I had been house surgeon at the West London Hospital; and neither was my colleague, the junior house surgeon, registered, nor did he register for some years after he passed, when he commenced private practice; and this was the frequent custom, if not the rule, of many of my contemporaries, not to register till they commenced practice, and in many cases I know they paid the fee themselves from their own earnings.

I am, Sirs, your obedient servant,

FREDERICK H. ALDERSON, M.D.

Hammersmith, Dec. 12th, 1891.

P.S. I enclose a type of many letters I have received, and the opinion expressed is almost universal.

#### *To the Editors of THE LANCET.*

SIRS,—In your issue of Saturday last, Dr. Samuel Wilks, referring to the General Medical Council, says that it was framed by Act of Parliament “as a Council of Medical Education and Registration for the purpose of supplying the public with fully educated medical men.” This, certainly, is one of the duties of the Council, but I maintain that its duties extend over a much wider area. As I have pointed out in a previous letter, the Act provides for the prosecution of unqualified and unregistered persons, and, further, gives authority to the treasurer of the Council to claim all penalties recovered under the Act (Med. Act, 1858, Sect. 42), thus implying that the Council is the proper authority to enforce its provisions. The chief grievance we, as general practitioners, have against the Medical Council is that after we have paid our fees for registration—which, by the way, are not always paid by our parents or guardians, as Dr. Wilks asserts—we are compelled, through the inaction of the Council, to enforce the penal clauses of the Medical Act at our own expense. There may not be, as Dr. Wilks says, “one word in the Act about professional interests”; but there are clauses relating to the admission of persons to the profession and to the conduct of both registered and unregistered medical practitioners, which, if strictly enforced by the Council, would very materially affect “professional interests.”—I remain, yours faithfully,

GEORGE BROWN,

President of the General Practitioners' Alliance.

Threadneedle-street, E.C., Dec. 14th 1891.

## A PLOT TO MURDER SANITARY REFORMERS.

(FROM A CORRESPONDENT.)

It will be remembered that a few months ago Dr. Treille, Chief of the Sanitary Service for the French Colonies, had a book sent him which he nowise expected, and which was marked private. It seemed strange that a book should be marked private; and, as Dr. Treille had received letters warning him his life was menaced, he felt suspicious. He cut the paper, loosened the string fastened round the book, and was about to look at it, when he found the binding somewhat stiff and difficult to open. His suspicions now being thoroughly aroused, he raised the binding slowly, gently, and but slightly, and peeped inside. This enabled him to perceive brass knobs, and he also saw that the book was hollowed out and filled with some substance. Taking the volume at once to the police station, Dr. Treille rushed off to warn his superior, M. Etienne, the Sub-secretary of State for the Colonies, who, he found, had received a similar volume. It was also discovered that a third volume of the same character had been sent to M. Constans, the Minister of the Interior. The perspicacity displayed by Dr. Treille, his rapidity in warning those whom he conceived might, and for the same cause, be exposed to the same danger, saved the lives of two Cabinet Ministers and his own existence. For a long time the police have in vain sought to discover the author of this attempted crime. After much hesitation and many investigations, the

police authorities have within the last few days come to the definite conclusion that the attempt is due to professional jealousy. The name of a high functionary has been even mentioned in connexion with this affair by some French papers, and the naval authorities have been called upon to continue their search for the criminal. It seems incredible that such a heinous crime should be the outcome of such petty motives, and yet there is no other plausible explanation forthcoming. The volumes were scooped out in the centre and a small tin box inserted containing 200 grammes of fulminate of mercury. By opening the book in the ordinary manner, friction would have been produced, resulting, on the principle of an ordinary cracker, in an explosion of detonating powder, which would have determined the ignition of the fulminate of mercury. The terrific force of the explosion that must have resulted can best be judged by the fact that the Orsini bomb was charged with only 40 grammes of the same substance. Not only would Dr. Treille's life have been sacrificed, but a portion of the house he inhabits would probably have fallen into the street, and many persons utterly unconcerned in the affair might have been killed and wounded. Also, if the contents of the books had not been discovered in good time, they might have blown up even without being opened, for it must be noted that Orsini kept his fulminate of mercury carefully packed in a wet towel, whereas the explosive found in the books was almost dry, for it only contained  $1\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. of water. This chemical, when perfectly dry, is so dangerous that it requires very little to determine an explosion.

It seemed extraordinary that so distinguished, popular, and amiable a person as Dr. Treille should be the victim of a desperate and dastardly attempt upon his life, and therefore I conceived it would be of interest to the members of the profession throughout the world to know something of the likely cause of such a crime. In the naval service Dr. Treille has travelled in most parts of the world, he is well acquainted with the English language and the English colonies, has many English friends, and is one of the most progressive administrators in the naval medical service. At the International Congress of Hygiene, held at Vienna in 1887, his paper on the Life of Europeans in Tropical Climates was considered so useful that it was reprinted in separate pamphlet form at the expense of the Congress. Nothing has ever transpired to suggest that there is any private personal motive for revenge against Dr. Treille, and if it were so, such motives would not apply equally to M. Constans and M. Etienne, who received at exactly the same time, from evidently the same source, explosive volumes of identically the same character. A mystery, in which the life of an eminent member of the profession was involved, together with the lives of two Cabinet Ministers, merited a special inquiry, and consequently I have collected what information I could on the subject.

The reforms recently effected in the French colonies are the only cause that can as yet be discovered to account with any degree of plausibility for these attempted murders. Dr. Treille had no personal acquaintance with M. Constans; but the Minister of the Interior, the Sub-secretary for the Colonies, and Dr. Treille were the three persons most concerned in bringing about the recent alterations, by which not only the commercial prosperity but the public health of the French colonies will be much improved. This is how the matter stands. Putting aside Algeria, most of the French colonies and protectorates were under the Ministry of Marine. But the naval authorities behaved more like conquerors than as colonisers. Gambetta first had the idea of uniting the administration of the colonies to the Ministry of Commerce, and this was the commencement of the independence of the French colonies. The Gambetta Ministry, however, lasted so short a time that the reform was not carried out, and the colonies reverted to the Ministry of Marine. It was not till March 14th, 1889, that the colonies were definitely made over to the Ministry of Commerce, and M. Etienne was appointed the first Sub-secretary of State for the Colonies with a seat in the Cabinet. M. Etienne was nominated through M. Constans's influence, and it is felt that so long as M. Constans remains in office M. Etienne will be maintained at his post, and the present system of reform for the colonies will not only continue, but be further developed. The supposition therefore arises that it was for this reason both M. Constans and M. Etienne received volumes charged with explosives.